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Notes on the occurrence of the planthoppers *Reptalus panzeri* (L ow) (Hemiptera: Cixiidae) and *Asiraca clavicornis* (Fab.) (Hemiptera: Delphacidae)—The characteristic planthoppers *Reptalus panzeri* (L ow) (= *Oliarius panzeri*) and *Asiraca clavicornis* (Fab.) are considered by many hemipterists to be very uncommon. In the national review by Kirby (1992), both are listed as being nationally scarce (notable B). Each is reported to be associated with rough grassland, especially dry open areas or where patches of bare soil are present. Both entries in the review are based upon very limited lists of recent records. However, local survey work has shown that both species are widespread and sometimes very abundant in south London. *Reptalus panzeri* also occurs periodically but widely elsewhere in south-east England. The following records have been made in the last few years.

REPTALUS PANZERI

Beckenham Place Park, TQ385706, VC16, West Kent, 27.vii.1995, one by sweeping rough grass at the edge of a small wooded area and next to a sports field. The rough verge-like strip along the edge of the wood was a south-east-facing bank with varied grass and herb species. The park comprises a mixture of ancient woodland, old hedgerows and modern utilitarian recreational playing fields. RAJ.

Dulwich Park, TQ339736, VC17 Surrey, 8.vii.1996, one photographed sitting on a rhododendron leaf in an ornamental garden. This is a most unlikely locality; the rhododendron bushes make up part of an extensive series of ornamental beds surrounded by closely mown grass. There is, however, something special about the site since it supports large colonies of the now scarce rhododendron lacebug *Stephanitis rhododendri* (Horvath), and the elusive rhododendron leafhopper *Placotettix taeniatifrons* (Kirsch.). RAJ.

Crystal Palace, TQ339709, VC17, Surrey, 24 & 25.vii.1996, 5.viii.1996, very many found by sweeping the rough grass and herbage on the derelict top and south-east-facing slopes where the Crystal Palace building itself had once stood. On 25.vii.1996, several hundred specimens were seen and it was the commonest insect at this typically ruderal site. RAJ.

Pebsham near Bexhill-on-Sea, TQ766093, VC14, East Sussex, 6.viii.1996, 7.vii.1997, 11.vii.1997, several swept off creeping thistle in a meadow containing a south-facing slope. PJH.

Rocks Farm, Westfield, near River Brede, TQ8117, VC14, East Sussex, 7.viii.1996, one swept in marshy area, possibly off creeping thistle. PJH.

Par Brook, Billingshurst, TQ081249, VC13, West Sussex, 18.vi.1997, a few swept off streamside vegetation in clayey meadow. PJH.

Windsor Great Park, SU975734, VC22, Berkshire, 24.vi.1997, 19.viii.1998, several swept off grass at edge of woodland in deer park. PJH.

Woodlands Farm (Shooters Hill), near Bexley, TQ449768, VC16, West Kent, 20.vii.1998, 3.viii.1998, many by sweeping in open meadows, once arable, but disused fallow for about 10 years. The fields have apparently been mown once or twice and

although full of long grass and tall herbage, there are still many patches of bare soil. RAJ.

Morden Cemetery, TQ233672, VC17, Surrey, 15.vii.1998, 5.viii.1998, 5.ix.1998, many swept in "nature areas", flowery meadow-like grassland left unmown until late summer or autumn. RAJ.

ASIRACA CLAVICORNIS

"The Mudchute", Isle of Dogs, TQ380788, VC21, Middlesex, 25.viii.1984, many hundreds by sweeping and grubbing on dry sunny bank. The plant life on the bank was dominated by a small unidentified spurge species, possibly a garden escape. RAJ.

Nunhead Cemetery, TQ355755, VC17, Surrey, 9.v.1991, 11.iii.1993, 11.v.1993, several by sweeping in rough grassy area behind ruined chapel. A few other specimens observed in subsequent years. RAJ.

Blackheath Hill, TQ383766, VC16, West Kent, 3.x.1995, one swept on rough grass hillside overlooking derelict factory plot and high-rise flats: a very scruffy site. RAJ.

Chinbrook Orchard, TQ415715, VC16, West Kent, 18 & 27.vi.1996, 10.vii.1996, several swept on each occasion from this overgrown allotment plot. RAJ.

Gargoyle Wharf, TQ262754, VC17, Surrey, 10.vi.1996, one swept from this derelict plot, once the site of warehouses and industrial wharfs, and now mainly rubble with rough herbage and buddleia growth. RAJ.

Hither Green "Nature Reserve", TQ402728, VC16, West Kent, 6.vi.1996, several swept from this open rough grassland running beside a railway line. RAJ.

New Cross Railway Cutting, TQ364764, VC16, West Kent, 27.iii.1997, several swept from dry open grassy clearing next to railway line. RAJ.

Both planthoppers used to be more often and more widely recorded (Kirby, 1992), but seem to have retreated from previous outlying localities until they are now more or less confined to the Home Counties. In his review, Kirby (1992) suggests that scrub invasion may be one of the major factors involved with the insects' decline. Certainly, the ruderal habitats in the London area have plenty of bare soil and are also sites for many other unusual and warmth-loving species more usually associated with dry sandy or heathy areas. The presence of cracks in the ground, or at least bare patches of soil, may be extremely important in the life cycle of *Reptalus*, whose nymphs, like those of other cixiids, are thought to be root feeders. *Asiraca* nymphs like many delphacids may be found close to the ground, although the adults may be found by sweeping. One wonders whether these curious insects are actually more widespread than records indicate, and would be found more readily by grubbing rather than by sweeping.—RICHARD A. JONES, 135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ & PETER J. HODGE, 8 Harvard Road, Ringmer, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5HJ

REFERENCE

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